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Out of the frying pan on into the fire

By RICHARD E. WARD

The first round of the latest Henry Kissinger-Le Duc Tho talks in Paris has ended inconclusively—with the U.S. still failing to live up to the Vietnam cease-fire accords signed earlier this year.

This new round of discussions became necessary because of continued violations of the agreements by the U.S. and their Saigon puppets. The problem for the U.S. is that if it pushes too hard, the whole Saigon government might rapidly collapse.

All the U.S. threats of the past few months and claims that the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) was planning a new offensive after the withdrawal of U.S. troops were lies. This propaganda was designed to conceal U.S.-Saigon violations of the peace agreement, including the shipments of vast quantities of U.S. arms to Saigon.

The U.S. must tread lightly, however, since Nixon's political and military position both domestically and internationally, has been so undermined. First, the U.S.-supported regime is in danger of collapse in Cambodia, despite support from U.S. bombers. Secondly, Nixon is under a growing attack from Congress on both the question of bombing and of further adventures in South Vietnam. Thirdly, Saigon dictator Nguyen Van Thieu's refusal to honor the cease-fire in South Vietnam and other provisions of the Paris Agreement might foreshadow a renewal of armed conflict in South Vietnam. With the failure of "Vietnamization," Nixon could not save Thieu from the effects of fighting without sending in new U.S. ground troops.

But the Paris Agreement provided for the return of all U.S. POWs and destroyed Nixon's last "justifications" for continued aggression in Indochina. Finally, the provisions of the Paris Agreement, stipulating restoration of genuine democratic liberties in South Vietnam, if carried out, clearly implied the political death of Thieu. Thus, Nixon and Thieu must be careful to attempt to avoid the fire of Thieu's military overthrow and the frying pan of implementation of the agreements which would lead to his democratic overthrow.

If the U.S. wanted genuine peace in Southeast Asia, it would not have continued the bombing of Cambodia and it would not have continued supporting Thieu's terror, including the CIA-financed Phoenix program for assassinating Thieu's opponents.

Naturally, Thieu cannot contemplate the end of his regime. But it should be evident that if Thieu alone were the problem, the current round of talks would have been quickly concluded. Without continued U.S. support Thieu would be finished in a few days. What really has been at issue these past weeks in Paris were not Thieu's objections

1973, but rather continued U.S. support for Thieu's violations of the Paris Agreement. Clearly, the DRV and PRG are not going to sign any U.S. proposal that would in effect, dilute the January Paris Agreement, or which would implicitly sanction the U.S.-Saigon violations of the peace accords.

Meanwhile, there is no end in sight of the U.S. atrocities in Cambodia, although one of the reported points of the current negotiations regards a pledge to end U.S. bombing in Cambodia. This remains within the realm of speculation, too, but it should be evident that the Paris negotiations could not realistically resolve the Cambodia conflict without the participation of Cambodian representatives from the Royal Government of National Union. An end to U.S. bombing and other support to the Lon Nol regime, would be the major step necessary to ending the war in Cambodia, which continues only because of U.S. intervention and its genocidal bombings.

As a Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff report, issued on June 10, stated: "The Khmer insurgents are growing in strength and confidence and moving from success to success. The Phnom Penh government, although it has the arms, seems to have neither the resolve nor the skill to contain them. If they cannot, their own fate will be sealed and the balance in South Vietnam could be substantially effected."

What the authors of the Senate report seem to be suggesting is that the game is up and the present U.S. policies are only hastening the day of final and complete U.S. defeat in Indochina.